





**EDGE CITY  
1989  
Number 8**

**Student Literary Magazine  
Mansfield University**

EDGE CITY is sponsored by the Mu Xi Literary Society, for which funding is provided by the Student Activity Fee.

This magazine is published once a year in the spring.  
Publication is limited to students enrolled at Mansfield University.

**Co-Editors**

Deborah Smith  
Laura Lathrop

**Editorial Staff**

Betsy Wyman  
Ray Waleski  
Theresa Higgins

**Advisor**

Dr. Sarah Toombs

## Table of Contents

The Poet	Theresa A. Higgins	4
Man of War		
(Dancing Days Are Here Again)	Michael Dieffenbach	5
untitled	Constance Sullivan	7
The New Hockey Helmet	Michael Logan	8
When I See You	Christopher Johannessen	14
Twilight By The Sea	William Moran	15
Riddle Of Woman	Laura Lathrop	16
My Father's Man	J. M. Brundage	18
Fighting Fire	George Mill	20
Big Questions From A Small One	Laura Lathrop	22
Around the Quilting Frames	Theresa A. Higgins	24
untitled	Amylynn Harple	26
untitled	Laura Wallens	27
A Myth	Denise Ferro	28
Innocence Lost	Lisa Belfield	30
Her Smile	Joseph M. Grier	31
A Long Day's End	Eric M. Smith	32

## Pictures

House	Lorena Beniquez	6
Papa	Ted Whitmer	17
Tree	Richard J. Fry	25
River	Lorena Beniquez	32

Cover by D.Y. Smith

## The Poet

— by Theresa A. Higgins

With merciless energy  
angry hands wrestle  
from the idea  
a set of words  
wildly fighting for  
their freedom.

With nails of ink  
words are  
crucified on  
flat white paper  
as the reader  
touches the  
blood and water  
of holy wounds  
and revels  
in the wonder.

## Man of War (Dancing Days Are Here Again)

— by Michael Dieffenbach

Dancing days, no custom some culture  
I have no idea why  
the sons & daughters of those  
latent fathers & mismatched mothers  
would desire betrothal  
even desire another  
If they've been willed to watch  
their mundane movie lives, can they learn?  
Will children be allowed to understand?  
Behold the masquerade, man's charade  
in a world turned hand grenade, swelling  
The chained together, plodding, witness to waste  
almost idle, thrall

For whom they wait I wonder  
There are names, they change  
these imitators claim they have  
powers we also possess;  
Again I wonder.  
I turn my head, the distressed  
get dressed, dwelling  
as the wicked placate themselves  
and sharpen their teeth, post prandial  
A deep breath will not change me,  
nor sustain me  
If this were the swan song  
would they listen?

And the decisions that have been made  
for us can now confine us  
What armor can be found or made  
to ensure pension, equity?  
When this life surrounds us,  
slowly undoes us, exposed  
or carefully concealed in shadows  
thrown from our being, peeling,  
Carrying the burden life the burden  
Endings dealt  
hatred, putrid, in pursuit of  
conciliation, emulated  
loll, rail.

Just as there are seldom rewards  
afforded rebels,  
there are questions unanswered  
to ask again  
To go without would be criminal,  
self-defeating, when will the beleagured  
bastions of pain prevail? When?  
If repentance could heal  
of experience could teach.  
Would man cast against man? Most certainly!  
Stand, look away, return dancing days  
recycle



— by Constance Sullivan

In the black and white camera  
I saw my friend's face.  
Lines caught at her eyes and  
the corners of her smile.  
She glanced up, her blue eyes  
filled with pain and a  
certain kind of grateful vulnerability.

She shrouds herself in the  
woman she longs to be.  
She is enfolded in honesty and  
suffering like a mist.  
Though she keeps us all at arm's length  
she wishes she could be embraced.

He wore a red cap over  
black wavy hair  
and smiled at my talk  
though his eyes were far away.  
Roaming the green and rain  
of Scotland that wrinkled  
his brow with a certain insightful passion.

He shrouds himself in the  
man he longs to be.  
He is enfolded in purity and  
loneliness like a mist.  
Though he keeps us all at arm's length  
he wishes he could be embraced.

I smile and wave and strut  
with my books under my arm.  
I laugh and dance and pretend  
that inside I am satisfied.  
But, I'm playing with some ideal  
of womanhood that I don't  
really believe and I'm watching you.

I shroud myself in the  
person I long to be.  
I am enfolded in sweetness and  
secrets like a mist.  
Though I keep you all at arm's length  
I wish I could be embraced.

## The New Hockey Helmet

— by Michael Logan

Jackie and Joey were similar in appearance. Each had straight brown hair that covered his eyebrows, a small, muscular frame, and large feet. Neither spoke very much; each was shy, in fact. People always mistook Joey for Jackie, or Jackie for Joey. The lunch lady at school, Mrs. Nice, never could tell them apart. And each boy was too shy ever to assert his own real name.

Jackie and Joey stepped into the gray still morning while the world continued to sleep and the houses were still dark. Jackie's spirit was initially deadened by the mud, gravel, rotting leaves, and wet blackened fields that lay everywhere. But the boys were wide awake now that their stomachs had been filled. Filled with oatmeal, as much as they could eat, with brown sugar and sliced bananas. Jackie and Joey had risen eagerly, jumping into their play clothes upon first opening their eyes, ignoring the stiff waking sensations, activating their thin, strong limbs, dressing silently, not forgetting their sweatbands and plastic combs and pocketchange and pocketknives. They had squinted under the kitchen's bare light bulb, fixing oatmeal to their greatest satisfaction and whispering about what they would do to the neighborhood today. Spend the day at the slab, build something there, something on which to do stunts with the skateboard: a ramp. So one boy grabbed the skateboard and the other grabbed the new hockey helmet and they headed for the slab.

They wished they had worn shorts because after crossing the old football field and the slimy mudbank beyond, their corduroys had become so heavy with moisture that they were scarcely able to run up the slippery, tiresome slope. By the time they reached the top of the bank, they were both visibly annoyed and panting. Thick wet hair soaked their heads and their feet were also soaked and heavy. Sweat stung their eyes and blurred the crude forms which lay everywhere. They crossed the smaller concrete slabs which at one time were used for tetherball and other odd events. The boys were only a short distance from the slab, but they were unable to see it for the fog and sweat, and because they did not look up from the ground because they were trudging together silently, and their trudging required a rhythm which was not to be broken just to gain sight of the slab which they already knew existed in the very near future.

Both the skateboard and the new hockey helmet belonged to Jackie. He had bought the skate with money he earned himself by cutting people's grass. The new hockey helmet was a gift from his parents who had urged him repeatedly to always wear it when skating. But it was never worn. Jackie never worried about injuring himself while skating. Why, he reasoned, should I wear a helmet for skating when I never wear

one for riding bikes? Bikes go faster than skateboards. Dad and Mom are just over-worried about me. So the new hockey helmet stayed on the floor of the concrete slab. Earlier, Jackie had mentioned to Joey the possibility of trading the new hockey helmet, since he never wore it, for a pair of Joey's old sneakers that Jackie liked. He wanted leather high-top sneaks like the skaters in California, whom he always saw in magazines. He had tried on Joey's old sneakers. He thought they gave his feet a lightness and sureness of step for which the new hockey helmet would be a smart trade.

Joey cruised the slab first, doing his best to achieve maximum velocity without losing control of the skate. Jackie watched, and sometimes stared into the wet concrete. He was resting his foot on the top of the new hockey helmet and gently rocking it back and forth on its earguards. He was thinking about jumping the skate. The problem lay in making a ramp smooth enough for the skate's wheels. The only planks he could see lying around the slab he judged to be too thick. They would create far too much disturbance where the wood met the concrete of the slab.

The slab was sheltered by an aluminum roof. It was old and had holes in it so the concrete was wet in spots. The center of the slab was totally dry. It was the best place to ride on the skateboard.

The slab used to be a basketball court. The parents of sports campers used to sit and watch their boys hustle and shout inside the sparkling, resonant, oversized aluminum tool shed while they sat on metal chairs. The metal chairs were now an unrecognizable heap of rust, rotting aluminum, and paint chips.

Jackie dragged the thinnest piece of plank he could find into the center of the slab. He propped it up on an ordinary cinderblock. He watched Joey skate around for a while. Joey shot the skate over to Jackie with his foot. Jackie lifted the skate to eye level and in one motion jumped up and placed his feet on it while letting go with his hand and slamming the wheels onto the slab. It looked like he was trying to break the skateboard.

"What are you doin'? Tryin' t' break it?" Joey asked

"No, man. It's a trick."

"Jeez."

Then Jackie bore down and skated around the inner part of the slab with his hair in his eyes and his forearms extended out straight like he was trying to balance a tray on his arms while skating. It was Joey's turn to do nothing for a while.

Joey's family lived in one of the buildings close to the road near the old sports camp. His father worked hard doing whatever odd jobs he could in order to maintain the household, but the money was usually short whenever it came time that any should be put into the house itself. Joey was the youngest of nine and most of his siblings had already left home. His two older sisters were still living at home because they were

just starting high school. Joey had his own room in the house but he had a set of weights and barbells that his older brother used once in a while and it sat in the middle of his room at all times.

Jackie admired the weight set. And he admired the fact that Joey gave whatever money he earned to his folks. Joey's mother sometimes gave Joey a sum of money with which to buy clothes and whatever else he might need at the time, like sneakers. Jackie didn't usually earn money himself but he did more than a fair share of hard work around his father's property and the neighbors' too. He cut grass. And he raked and he raked, and stacked wood. Jackie always had enough clothes and sometimes his father would give him a twenty dollar bill and say it was okay for Jackie to get whatever he wanted. Like a skateboard. Joey's money was automatically handed over to his parents. He sold worms and pulled weeds after school and the money went to buy cigarettes and aspirin and cheese. On Sundays, Joey's dad would want a pound of sharp cheese with which to watch the football games.

Both Joey and Jackie shoplifted often. They would get enough cigarettes to appease Joey's older sisters (who would otherwise be asking them for money to buy a pack) and the boys secretly kept some in Joey's room but never wanted to smoke them. They provided the boys with a piece of adulthood which they did not understand and so the stale pack in Joey's room became a source of amusement somewhat like a nostalgic photograph, a funny-looking photograph of a skinny old man in a red and white striped bathing suit. The older sisters were always so nice when they had plenty of cigarettes to smoke. Joey and Jackie knew this and thought it was amusing.

A slouched, strutting figure with hair in the face and cigarette approached, not avoiding the muddiest part of the field, but walking directly through it. The mud sucked the heels of the boots and the bottoms of the denim pants. Selfconsciousness immobilized the boys. Joey breathed quickly.

"Jeez- aw jeez- let's jus' go."

"He saw us already. What's he gunna do anyway?"

Joey wouldn't look at Jack. He kept glancing around and then staring very worriedly at the spectre in the black denim jacket.

"Jeez- this ugly bastard!"

Wayne Ackerman had nothing better to do than to go up to the slab. He carried a couple fresh packs of Newports in one of his black gloves. His head was hung forward low, and the lit cigarette caused such a terror in the brains of the boys that they were unable to do anything other than stare and stare, helplessly trying to control their heartbeat.

"Hey f--- you, Joey Donner!" Wayne Ackerman turned his shoulders sideways and held his middle finger out in front of his face above his head. His squinted puffy eyes and warped smile told the simple story of his experiences of the night before.

"Took Loretta up in the top parta that long house. Had a little

tongue party. Howard's got two sixes still so 'e got Shelley Suncey up 'ere fer a look-around. You wanna do that, Joey? Shelley Suncey?" He coughed and hacked and spat. "Naaa. You wouldn't knowda proseejer, wooja?" His face dropped for half a second. "You two don't even know what I'm talkin' about, do ya?"

Joey and Jackie were too timid to say even a single word after listening to Wayne Ackerman. Wayne sensed their tenseness and smiled. He studied the younger boys for a while but he was uncomfortable with the silence. He offered them cigarettes.

"Joey 'er Jackie wanna smoke?"

"No."

"No, Joey? You wanna cigarette, liddo Jackie?"

Wayne took a long, stoned look at the boy with the skateboard and the new hockey helmet next to his feet.

"Nope."

"Izziz yer cuz er sumpin, Joey?"

"What?"

"Are yoo guys CUZZins?!"

"Nope."

"You guys are twins!" Wayne declared. And then he added,

"Yer jussa little faggit erncha, Joey? You ran away from Victor Biglip again, yoo fag."

Joey shook slightly.

"And yoo were takin' ferever. I had about seven packs in my hand, Joey."

Wayne's long blonde curls shook on the sides of his stoned cherub face. Joey let the tears drop from his eyes.

"Lookit you- don't cry, yoo fag!"

A car rolled down the dirt road that came down off the mountain behind the sports camp. It was full of loud young people, teenagers, friends of Wayne's, one of whom was hanging out of the window, holding a bunch of beer cans over his head and jeering and shouting. Wayne, responding, gathered himself and walked out into the wet brown field, pointing and following the vehicle with one black glove and cigarette.

"Yoo bedder save a six!" he yelled, and he just kept walking into the fog without looking back at the slab. There was rain now.

"He never gets caught anyway," said Jackie.

"Yeah . . . jeez-" Joey snuffled and put his face on his shoulder.

The boys gathered up their change and their combs, sort of automatically, right after Wayne was gone. They walked all the way back to Joey's without talking or anything. The inside of Joey's house was cooler than it was outside. And darker. His parents had the T.V. on in the parlor, but the boys didn't go in to say hello or anything. They went all the way down the hall to Joey's room. When they got there, Joey lay on his bed and Jackie sat on the floor. They still weren't talking. Jackie thought about being back at his own house, in the kitchen or in the

garage. He wanted to take off his shoes but he didn't. He felt like it was perhaps time to leave, but he didn't leave. He just curled his arms around his knees and rested his head on them.

Joey sat up on the edge of the bed and froze for half a second as if to read a short message written on the wall of his bedroom. Then he opened his drawer and took out a pair of dry pants and changed. He stood in front of the dusty full-length mirror on his door. He pulled the chain on the light socket hanging from the middle of the ceiling and began to part his hair. Jack lifted his head and found his face in the mirror. He looked at Joe's face and then at his own. He wondered why he and Joey were so often mistaken for each other.

"Think we look alike?"

"No," said Joey. The word sounded like a question.

"Your hair's longer."

"And your face is uglier." Joey smiled at his quickness. "Just kiddin'."

Joey picked up a record and put it on the record player on the floor and turned up the volume so the speaker was trembly and loud and then left the room. Jack didn't pay any attention. He kept thinking about where he was, in the house of Joey's, where there was no phone, no aspirin. He wondered why the paint was peeling so badly, why there was sawdust all over the bathroom and the hallway, why there was no light fixtures, why Wayne called Joey names and not him, and why Joey cried. He stayed on the floor for a while. Then Joey came in with a couple small boxes of cereal. The two ate. Then they got thirsty and drank water out of two tall plastic cups. The water was lukewarm. Jackie thought about the slab and the skateboard and the new hockey helmet. He felt a dull sense of futility and lethargy, and a vague feeling of guilt and disappointment. Jackie pushed himself up on his feet and gathered the skateboard and new hockey helmet.

"S' about time for me to go."

"Okay." Joey watched Jackie wipe the moisture from the new hockey helmet with the front of his shirt. "You still wanna trade that?"

"Can't man."

"You never wear it."

"Wol, I wear it sometimes."

"I never saw."

"I never wear it around here."

"Whyja bring it?"

"I dunno. If we made a big ramp or somethin', I woulda wore it . . . I'll see ya. I gotta get goin'."

"See ya."

Jack sauntered out into the foggy road and began trudging, head down. He didn't feel much like whistling or smiling or anything. When he got to the paved road, he put the skate down on its wheels and gave a sluggish push which started him rolling. Not fast, but steadily along the

wet, smooth pavement he rolled and rolled with his new hockey helmet in his hand. He considered it and then began to inspect it more closely. He examined while he rolled the sculpted plastic shell, the sturdy nylon chinstrap, and the stiff, foam-rubber cushions for the head on the inside. He looked all around. He saw dark houses and rusty things in driveways and rotting leaves and gravel and fog. He put the new hockey helmet on his head. He swung his arms around a bit, since both were now free, and he swayed from side to side a bit not losing his balance. He thought to himself how comfortable the new hockey helmet is, and why did he dislike it so much when he first got it. He remembered his birthday and how he expected to see a pair of new sneakers like Joey's on his bed, but he found the new hockey helmet instead. He envisioned his parents as children and, for a moment, he felt his chest stiffen as his vision became temporarily blurred under his eyes. He gave himself a couple of big boosts with his right foot and stood upright on the skate, listening to the spray under the skate as the skate cut two shining lines with its wheels in the smooth wetness of the blackened pavement.

## When I See You

— by Chris Johannessen

Mountains move, valleys widen  
The skies clear and the air warms up  
When you walk into my eyes

The great lovers of the past  
Antony and Cleopatra  
Romeo and Juliet, the millions of other lovers  
Split into pairs and form an avenue  
    for us to promenade down  
When we climb into the palms of each other's hands.

The world melts soothing warmth like Dali's imaginings,  
A new day rises and everything appears  
    touched by the Midas strength of our love,  
When we roll ourselves into a ball of sweetness  
    Clutch-tearing at one another in firepassionfury  
    Attempting to devour each other with the hungry jaws of love

The sky explodes, and lemon drops rain down  
    from the heavens, cleansing the world of pain  
                of fear  
                of hatred

When I See You.

And someday soon but not soon enough,  
We will wrap ourselves around each other's fingers.

And when that happens  
    the mountains will move once again  
    the millions will gather for our love parade  
    the Midas illusion will become reality  
As we ascend into the land of angels and saints  
    two bodies with one mind climbing through life together.

## Twilight By The Sea

— by William Moran

A gull glided over the water looking for its prey as a cool wind blew in off the ocean and breakers washed over ancient rocks. In the solitude of the moment, a man alone with his thoughts stared out to sea without seeing anything.

A woman appeared out of the distance and rested her hands on the wooden railing of the pier in a way that suggested she was intimately familiar with the chipped surface. Too familiar, as though remembering what was, but yet no longer exists.

The man barely acknowledged the arrival of the woman. Her elegant features were lost in the pain of the memory of things forgotten and things remembered. If you had asked the man, he might have described her as his dream. But then again, if you had asked her, she would have told you he had stopped noticing her a long time ago.

It was the woman who broke the silence. "How have you been?" she whispered without looking at him. The man felt a tightening in his throat as he mumbled something resembling "good."

"I'd hoped you'd show. I missed you," she said as another breaker crashed on the rocks below.

"Well, you really missed me all those other times. Did you think I was stupid? If you thought it was over, why didn't you tell me?" Tears welled up in the eyes of the man as he let his emotions say what he couldn't.

The woman thought about what had been said. "You wouldn't have understood," she said. "I needed you. He's been there a lot longer than you think. I needed someone. You just weren't there and he was."

"Damn, I loved you, I still love you, but things . . . things just got in the way," he whispered in a voice that came from somewhere deep within.

"Yeah, you loved me. I was the one part of your life you could ignore. I would have had a better chance if I was a client, or even a profit report," the woman said, pressing each word out through clenched teeth.

A light rain began to fall as the two figures stood facing the ocean, neither having much more to say.

The man took a deep breath and put his thoughts into words. "So this is it, it just ends here?"

The woman reached into her pocket and pulled out a tissue. "No, it ended a long time ago, but we just never let go," she said in a strained gravelly voice.

The man turned to face the woman, but sensing that there was

nothing to see, the woman held on to her view of the turbulent sea.

As if on cue, both figures turned and walked slowly away in opposite directions as a gull swooped down on an unsuspecting fish, forever separating it from the comfortable confines of its watery home.

Sometimes something has to die so that something else can live.

## Riddle Of Woman

— by Laura Lathrop

She is as calm as the early dawn,  
Before the angels lift their wings  
From the protected earth and let the  
Morning's pure white light shine like  
A rekindled lamp in the darkness.

She is furious like the raging storm at sea.  
She whips sails until they are tattered and worn.  
Her angry waves toss large boats about just like  
Match boxes in a roaring fire that will consume them.  
Her fury crashes down on everything in sight  
With no mercy — with no mercy.

Yet, her radiance shines through like that  
Of a child's smile. The smile of a child is  
Brighter than the sun breaking through  
A storm cloud. It holds a brand of  
Beauty and Innocence that can not be  
Measured by any other living thing.

Yet, at times, she is Lucifer.  
Dark-faced, groaning, mumbling, hating.  
She falls from light to dark as easily  
As he did. She, though, has only love in her heart.  
A central light still burns bright when surrounded by darkness.

Little does one realize,  
In time to come,  
Not any of these features  
Do change with age.  
And that is just as well;

She is the same as me.



## My Father's Man

— by J. M. Brundage

And then my father sent us early to the summer place and it was a cottage on the lake where I used to swim with my friends and we would paddle out into the lake with the skiff and when we were older my father's man helped us to rig a sail and we would sail in the bay where it was calmer, and not into the lake proper because it might be too rough for us. It was very nice. It was dawn and someone gave us eggs for breakfast and I had not eaten eggs for so long and I did not like them scrambled but Philomel poked me and told me not to tell and my father's man scrambled them for us and told us to meet him outside when we were finished and he told us what clothes to wear because he said it would be rough today. When we had finished and had packed a small bag and a lunch of cheese and bread for the day we went outside where the clouds were darkened and unfolded upon themselves in the wind. There was the warm, wind-chilly spring day smell of worms coming out of the ground. There were some people around in the other cottages and down at the docks men arranged fishing gear and I remember it was time for trout fishing and the ice had just left the lake from the winter and I remember my father's man promised he would take me out for the trout when the ice left the lake because I was old enough now and Philomel was with me and I held her hand as we walked the muddy drive to the docks where the skiffs were being readied. A friend of my father's man came up to us and escorted us and he was shaking. I could smell the gin on his breath. It was on his clothes, too. Some people waved to us and he was very nervous. He told us to ignore them and Philomel poked me and whispered that he had a gun but she was always making up things like that to amuse me. She was younger than me. I think she was my sister. Some men gave us candy and asked us where my father was and I told them that he was coming to join us tomorrow like my father's man told me to tell them and at the dock they asked my father's man and he told them something and they laughed and my father's man wanted us to hurry so that we could be off. The other man was arranging the fishing poles in the boat and he lifted the heavy tackle box into the center of the boat. It was very cold at the dock and out on the bay the waves bounced helter-skelter and some of them showed white when they broke and it would be very rough when we left the bay and went to the place my father's man told me he wanted to take us. Philomel said she did not like the men on the dock who asked us questions and stared into our faces and had bad breath and I put my arm around her. She was very pretty and I was afraid that she would be cold. We sat in the bow on the floor of the skiff and my father's man rowed us across the bay. Later he changed places with his friend and his friend rowed us across the lake towards the other side where my father

told me the people went to be free. My father's man gave him small glasses of gin as he asked for them and I could tell it was very hard rowing. My father's man watched the lake around us. There were many people on the lake for the fishing, heading for their favorite cove or bay or creek I suppose and there were some following us. My father's man was a very good fisherman and he used to tell me stories about how he thought he could make a living just from fishing and promised I could come along with him whenever I wanted to. Perhaps they wanted to follow him to find his secret hiding place. He took the gun from his friend and wiped it with a rag from the tackle box and checked to see it was loaded and I sat up and he told me to stay me to stay down because it was so rough. It started to rain very lightly and then the drops came down suddenly large and splattering us. He wrapped the gun in the rag to help keep it dry and placed it on the seat between his legs and said something to his friend in that other language. The man grunted. He was sweating heavily. The other boats following us on the lake were coming closer and it must have been very hard for them rowing hard enough to catch up and they shouted to us. The man stopped rowing and took off his coat and laid it quickly over us and took the glass of gin and swallowed it, all without hardly missing a stroke. We covered ourselves with the overcoat like my father's man told me to do and the rain fell heavier and it collected in the bottom of the boat and Philomel and I lay shivering and the water soaked into us and splashed around our feet. Still we continued rowing for the other side. Several times I peeked out carefully but my father's man saw me each time. He calmly told me to be still. He was very nice.

Then we were very close to the other side and the people came out of the woodline to the shore and were waving and shouting to us but the other boats were only a dozen yards behind us and I had the heavy gun in my hand and my father's man was lying very still in the bobbing water and his friend was sitting very still with the broken oars, shaking badly, and he drank the rest of the gin in one gulp. Philomel was trying to cling to me and she was saying to me, "Richard," and then she was dead, too.

## Fighting Fire

— by George Mill

Midnight call, mid-dream awakening.  
Thought I saw a Phoenix sitting  
on the pyre, smirking at our efforts  
to put out the fire.  
Cold shoes on, turnout gear all set.  
Dark roads ride hard when  
sleep hasn't yet left.  
Red light beckoning  
we're on our way.  
Sirens screaming  
hurry before it's too late.

Saw a house die once. Mourners  
held a wake, stood weeping  
watching flames lick their  
way through all the years . . .  
no more family albums,  
no more grandma's china,  
no more ragged dolls,  
no more favored chair.  
Standing in the night  
watching the mourners  
mourn, I'd rather face  
fire than all their tears.

Slither out the hose quickly,  
put fangs toward the fire.  
Get ready, Phoenix, war  
is to begin. Pumper start the water.  
Battle has begun.  
Air pack over shoulder,  
a python's head in my hands,  
going inside the Phoenix  
pyre to make a stand.

I dreamed once of Dante.  
It's almost like this.  
His inferno was far cooler  
far more civil  
than these indignant orange teeth.  
Is this one we'll win?

So alone in the heat.  
Like a naked  
Leda before Zeus.  
Have I what it takes?  
Will this pyre be mine this time?  
I have faced the flames before  
It is when they touch my back  
That hurts me most.

Pythons surround the Phoenix.  
Aerial altars offer alms to the sky.  
Pumpers sing midnight hymns on all sides  
Within the Phoenix guts  
I crawl intent on attack.  
Flames stomp angrily about.  
The python squeezes out  
life but the Phoenix is renewed  
farther to the left.  
My partner touches  
my boots from behind.

Time to go.  
Too much here for us.  
Outside, cool breath again.  
Python water struggles  
with the pyre.  
Two old elements wrestle  
while air and earth await.  
Red rage. White anger.  
Where is the Phoenix now?  
A flash of fiery wings bid goodbye.  
Within the pyre sings more softly  
Its life fled with the Phoenix.  
Saved are many limbs —  
a kitchen and living room  
a bedroom and a parlor.  
The Phoenix took  
the upper half to  
appease ancient pride.  
A compromise this night we have made  
but I know this creature well.  
Its legend lives. It will rise  
some other time, in some other place  
I will rise along with it.  
Old foes destined to meet again.

## Big Questions From A Small One

— by Laura Lathrop

The sunshine poured down between the leaves of the trees while the warm breeze gently rustled them. Some leaves gave way from their home tree and floated softly to the ground. On the ground, a huge pile of them were raked together. Voices came from the pile. It was as if the thing was alive. Sticking out of it were a small set of hands and feet and a larger set of hands and feet. Suddenly the pile of leaves gave a lurch and two individuals appeared in the middle of it. One was a small boy and the other was a young woman. Both laughed as a leaf from above floated down and landed on top of the boy's light brown hair. Andy jerked sideways quickly to remove it. It fell into his lap. His light tanned hands picked it up.

"Carrie, what kind of leaf is this?"

"It is a leaf from an elm tree."

"How do you know?"

"From its shape. See how it is different from this one? This one is from a maple tree because it looks like a small outspread hand. This one from the elm tree has only one point on it and is like a rounded triangle."

"When did you learn that?"

Carrie smiled as she thought. "My Mom and Dad showed me the leaves one Fall when I was just about your age."

"You were small like me once?!"

Carrie laughed. "It's hard to believe, isn't it?" Andy's attention changed to the words on his babysitter's red t-shirt. He was unusually inquisitive that day.

"What does your shirt say?"

"It reads "My tastes are simple. I only like the best."

"What do you like the best of?"

Carrie thought. She honestly did not know how to answer him. Finally she spoke.

"Oh, I like to read Hemingway. He's a writer. I like antique cars that are shown at the fairs, and I like to listen to music a lot."

"You mean like Bon Jovi, Tina Turner, and Whitesnake?!" Carrie shifted her heavy set body and stretched out her legs.

"Yes, I like all of them. How do you know them?"

"DAD and I watch MTV!"

"Oh, okay." Carrie had wondered where he had heard of them. Carrie was getting restless. She playfully shoved some leaves in Andy's direction. He quickly responded and a leaf fight ensued. Leaves were thrown up in the air as well as at each other. The pile of leaves became spread out more than it was deep. She raked some of the leaves together with her light hands and then sat down in the middle again. She then

noticed she had leaves in her short dark brown hair. She pulled gently at them to get them out. Andy kneeled next to her to help.

"Carrie, will you come see my baby when it's born?"

"Of course I will!" Carrie laughed at the thought of the baby being his. "Are you looking forward to having a new baby brother or sister?"

"Yeah! Mom said I would have someone to play with. Maybe this winter!"

"Well, maybe next winter. The baby will be too small to go out and play this winter."

"OH."

Both stretched out on the pile of leaves and looked up at the trees and the sky. Carrie crossed her arms behind her head. The boy followed her example. She looked at him and smiled. He looked handsome in his red corduroy overalls and the short-sleeved red, white and blue cotton knit shirt he had on. He was looking at the sky and his hazel eyes shined in the sunlight. His face looked worried though.

"Andy, are you worried about the baby?"

"Kind of."

"What are you worried about?"

"I don't kno-o-o-w-w!"

"Yes you do. Come on, tell me. You know you can talk to me."

"Mom and Dad will love the baby more than they will me!" The words came out of his mouth as hurried as if they were spilled milk from a tumbled glass.

"No, Andy, no they won't. That's what's nice about parents. They love all of their children equally. Besides, didn't you hear what your Mom said to you before she went to work today? She said you would always be her most precious baby because you were her first one."

"Oh, yeah! That's right!"

"See, you don't have to worry about that."

"Yeah, but . . ."

"But what?"

"The baby will take over my room and then I will have to sleep in my swimming pool!"

"No, Andy. You will always have your room. It will always be *your* room because *you* had it first. You know Mom and Dad are fixing up the small room next to you for the baby. That room will always be the baby's room. Each of you will have your own rooms."

"But when the baby gets older, he will need a bed instead of a crib. Mom said so. Then it will have my bed and I won't have any."

"Your Mom and Dad will get a bed something like yours for it when the time comes. But that will be a while yet. It won't be long until it will be here and you will see for yourself that everything will be okay. I know you are excited about having a baby brother or sister."

Andy smiled. It was like the sun had broken through a storm cloud.

"Yeah, I wish it would hurry up and get here! I want to see it."

"I think all of us want to see it. Nine months is a long time to wait, isn't it?"

"Yes, why is it that way?"

Carrie had to admit to herself that it was a good question. Thoughts raced through her mind. Again, she did not know how to answer him. She spoke finally.

"It is the way God made it. He is the one who made the rules of nature and we live by them. He decided what color the sky would be, what color the grass would be, and he decided how long mommies should carry their young before they are born."

"God makes a lot of decisions, doesn't he?"

"Yes he does. It makes things a lot easier for us." She smiled about her last remark because she was kidding when she had said it. It was enough to satisfy the boy's questions though. He got up and brushed himself off.

"I want to slide down the slide."

"Okay."

The boy ran to the ladder and climbed up it. Carrie sat up and watched him. She remembered her first swing set and the slide. Andy yelled in delight as he slid down the slide. He quickly ran to the ladder to climb up it again. Carrie smiled as she watched him. She knew everything would be all right. She lay back down on the pile of leaves and looked up at the sky. It was bright blue.

## Around the Quilting Frames

— by Theresa A. Higgins

we women speak  
of the birthing times  
of pain and blood  
our voices flint  
our words steel.  
we edge our world  
with iron lace  
feminine yet durable.

badges of birth  
listen ashamed  
to hear the pain  
they do not know  
pride of blue ribbon  
productions we feel,  
seeds of our own  
cast in lasting wind.



— by Amylynn Harple

It seems to come so suddenly  
not unlike a vibrant flash of light,  
yet it is darkness.  
Is it warm, or is it cold?  
It engulfs my body  
and delves into my mind  
Such a mischievous creature, darkness is  
It holds an uncertain society of its own.  
Playing pranks in my eyes  
unconscious fears come to surface  
Spinning, clutching, grasping  
at shades of gray, almost luminous  
Thrilling, entralling, and exciting.  
The darkness is sometimes breathtaking  
Colours of life are disguised within dappled shadows.  
It longs to be feared and admired.  
I am obligated to stand in awe  
Primeval instincts rapidly emerge  
from a supposedly educated mind  
Confusion —  
An urge to run, an urge to freeze  
should I go, or stay?  
In this unknown world of night.  
Too late! It is gone.  
It seems to leave so suddenly  
not unlike a vibrant flash of light  
Yet, it is darkness.

— by Laura Wallens

The wind blows the grains of sands  
Against my ankles  
As I walk toward the water.  
I feel you here, in the stinging  
Of the wind-blown sand.

As I come closer to the water  
The sand becomes wet.  
I look up to see the sunlight glaring  
Off the smooth, soft waves  
I see you here, in the blurring  
Of my vision

I walk slowly into the water  
Letting the waves caress my legs.  
As I move deeper into the sea,  
I am positive you are here.

For your healing warmth surrounds me  
In a familiar way  
As the water pushes itself  
Around me.

As each wave rushes by,  
I feel your hands massage me.  
Suddenly I realize the power  
of the ocean  
And feel the power  
Of your love

## A Myth

— by Denise Ferro

After Prometheus created Man of the Earth, he realized that the seas contained nothing other than various kinds of fish. He split the people on the land into two groups, commanding one group to remain above the waters, and the other group to plunge into the oceans after he gave them special lungs.

For a while everything on the earth and in the water lived in peace, and worshipped their deathless gods. Man of the Waters began to wonder if Man of the Land could plunge into the oceans to start communications (after all, Man of the Waters had originally come from land, and they were curious as to what was going on above ground).

Since both Man of the Land and Man of the Waters had been faithful to the gods, Prometheus made it possible for both species to enter each other's worlds for hours at a time, and provided them with the same language.

Decades passed before Prometheus discovered the wickedness of humankind: Man of the Waters became jealous of Man of the Land, due to the fact that Man of the Land could enjoy the warmth of Helios by day while there was no Helios under the water. Therefore Man of the Waters condemned Man of the Land. During the day the water people would taunt the land people, trying any way possible to get them into the water. Once in the water, the water people killed the land people. So that Prometheus wouldn't see them, Man of the Waters would climb onto the shores and go hunt for Man of the Land at night.

It didn't take long for the land people to realize what was happening. They prayed to Prometheus for help against their aquatic brothers, and offered mass sacrifices to the god to accelerate his decision. But Prometheus found nothing unusual on Earth (for Man of the Waters did their hunting at night), and thought Man of the Land was envious of the water people for their special world. Hence, he did nothing.

Soon Man of the Land took it upon himself to right the wrong that Prometheus overlooked. The land people dove into the water to avenge the deaths of their relatives. They slaughtered children of the water people while the water people mocked them before swimming gracefully away. The land people couldn't catch the adult water people, for Man of the Land was not equipped for ocean living as was Man of the Waters, but those that they did capture were massacred mercilessly.

One day Prometheus, in disguise as a middle-aged man, walked along the shores of the beach. He had noticed that both species of man had slacked off on their worshipping of him, and he intended to find out why. The god was at the water's edge when a horde of people carrying weapons rushed over the terrain towards the ocean. He paused as the

people advanced and listened as one of the leaders said, "Do you forget what has happened to our people? Do you forget your own family, butchered in their sleep by those mocking brutes of the water?" Prometheus shook his head in answer, and the man continued: "Well, then, where are your weapons? Get them, and let us seek our much awaited justice!"

The god answered, "Should you not let the gods determine what type of justice should be merited? You could be undergoing a very grave mistake."

"The gods! We have consulted with Prometheus in our hour of need, and he has done nothing but turn his back on us. Do you consider that justice? No! We must take the situation in our own hands. Come, join us!"

Prometheus did as bade, feeling guilty for the neglectful treatment he had given his people. In an attempt to resolve the cause of his people's vehemence, he plunged into the dark water with them. He was shocked at the way the water people mocked the land people, and became infuriated when the water people slandered his existence. Enraged, he shed his common appearance and donned his immortal apparel before the eyes of both races. He called for Poseidon to witness his proclamation:

"Man of the Waters asked for relationships with Man of the Land, but what has he done with that privilege? Is this how water people show their gratitude, by murdering and mocking their own brothers? On top of this you defame the names of the gods who created you! Because of this, you shall no longer exist as Man of the Waters. You shall become one of the many fishes under Poseidon's rule. You shall have your own language, but you will be able to communicate with only yourselves. Since you have found it so amusing going ashore to kill your brothers, you shall attempt to go ashore, not to kill mankind, but to meet your own death. Your fate lies within the powers of Poseidon: he alone will decide when you are to search for land."

"As for Man of the Land, your ability to remain submerged is taken away, for you have had no faith in the gods. From now on, anyone under water for any length of time will die. The gods have spoken."

And so Man of the Waters became a species known today as whales, and even today they can be found on beaches when Poseidon has decreed it is their time to die.

## Innocence Lost

— *Lisa Belfield*

Child buried in the steel arms of mankind  
Lost in the shadows of an unpainted world  
"Come here sweet girl . . ."  
"Over here baby . . ."  
"Taste this . . ."  
"Drink that . . ."  
On the merry-go round one calls Life  
Round and round she goes  
Never ending, death below  
Soundless cries,  
Listen . . .  
Can you hear them?  
Ever so softly, yearning for an end  
to her forsaken world  
Innocence slowly sinking  
Outstretched hands  
Reaching up, higher, higher  
But alas, all in vain  
She has slipped through . . .  
And the steel arms await  
For can you hear?  
Another  
Innocence Lost.

## Her Smile

— by Joseph M. Grier

I haven't seen too many oceans  
nor have I traveled to earthly paradises  
I never took time to count the stars in the darkened heavens  
and I've never had the incentive to walk the beautiful wooded lands  
Somehow, like Dickinson, I have done all these things  
sailed, swam and splashed in the bluest of oceans  
strolled proudly upon the beaches of earthly paradises  
taken flight to the heavens and counted the stars — one by one  
and picked and admired roses planted in God's beautiful wooded lands  
My adventure took flight when — she smiled  
I shall not give her name  
I don't even know if I really knew who she was,  
all I know is — she smiled  
and when she did, the light from that smile added new and  
bright meaning to my life  
I have never seen a smile such as that since  
When she smiled the pressure of my adversity ceased.  
When she smiled, comfort became my pillow and security my bed.  
When she smiled, anxiety was released and self confidence became my  
guide  
How I remember!  
Her smile caused me to love for the first time  
and her smile is the reason I will never forget love.



## A Long Day's End

— by Eric M. Smith

I receive pleasure in feeling my debts are paid,  
And comfort in knowing the will is made.  
Escape is near as I lie back, purged and pure.  
Feeling pain and burden — too hard to endure.  
Watching the twilight dim since it is the end,  
I know my earthly duty's done, few sins to amend.  
Visions of fire and light float in my head,  
A last moment of prayers before all hope is dead.  
Then I close my eyes as my soul slips gently away,  
Such a sweet silence falls over the day.  
The scent of fruits and flowers intrigues my delight,  
While a spirit guides my freedom — my new-found light.



